1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria

487 the bed of the stream; these are held in position between upright
491 poles set V-wise in the boulders, to which are fastened horizontal
[327] bamboo poles as railings. As they have no saws, the 'plank' is a tree trunk with one side trimmed flat with the axe. Even more elaborate bridges are sometimes made at high levels over streams liable to flood, from tree-fork to tree-fork on opposite banks.

361 Though, as has been said above, agricultural conditions nowadays determine village sites, hill-tops or rocky slopes remain favourite sites, and become commoner as you penetrate farther into the Abujhmar hills. The traditional arrangement is a street some
[363] twenty-five yards wide between parallel lines of long-houses; at one end of the street is the *gotul-lon* or village dormitory, generally within a rounded bamboo fence, and sometimes in front of this dormitory will be seen the *udam-garia* or seat of honour of the *kasyeq-gaita* and possibly also of the secular headman (*gaita* or *peda*), as well as the stones on which the other village elders sit around with them in conclave; but the *udam-garia* custom is not found in
[778] all parts of the hills. Sometimes the shrine of the *Nar-Talughi* or Village Mother is actually inside the dormitory fencing, and she is often housed there for a while when a village is being shifted. There are, as a rule, no *bari* (vegetable gardens) attached to each house as amongst most Gonds, including the Bison-horn Marias and the Murias of Bastar; but sometimes the *kasyeq-gaita* has a small tobacco *bari* attached to the dormitory in the centre of the main street. The *Gazetteer* (p. 50) speaks of the 'common granary' as standing in the broad street; but with one partial exception, Nugur village in Kutru Mar in the Indrawati valley, I have never
343 seen this. The villagers generally construct a row of granaries
251 (*manda* or *wijja-dodi*) on piles at the side or rear of the main village street, sometimes nearer the *penda* fields than the village; this row can hardly be called a 'common granary', as each villager has his own granary in the row for his own private food and seed store, the granaries being built together only for convenience, as they can then be watched at night by one watchman for the whole village, sleeping in a special hut at the side of the granaries or under a granary. At Nugur there were big matting bins in the main street in which all the rice seed of the village was stored; but here
[426] the village had come under the economic thraldom of some Teli tradesmen, who for years had advanced rice to the cultivators. The bins were left in the collective charge of the headman and elders, and any villager could help himself to seed on the understanding that at harvest he would replace it with 50 per cent. interest, the Teli owners being also free to remove the surplus from time to time.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949.
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria

Lohu
1 *alpanji* platform for storing produce.
10 large baskets, containing grain and forest fruits.
1 blue dancing skirt or *kachi*.
5 gourd bottles.
1 axe.
2 sickles.
4 large earthenware pots.
1 ditto, used as *Hanal Kunda*.
1 hearth, used as *Hanal O'idal*.
3 very small earthenware pots of pigs' fat.
6 thick bamboo oil-tubes.

422

Most houses have, besides these, a number of drums, more bows and arrows, fishing-rods, lines and hooks, snares, nets of varying mesh for fish, birds and animals, throwing spears, fibre for making string and rope, hemp or grass for the same purpose, sandals of raw cow-hide, thongs of cow-hide, and *korr-guda*, or funnel-shaped hen's nests on bamboo posts about two feet high. They keep the bulk of their grain and forest fruits in their granaries, and the baskets in the house contain only what has been removed from the granary for current consumption; there are generally to be found quantities of new baskets made for sale at the bazaar. The baskets are of all shapes and sizes, and amongst other items include flat baskets something like winnows for use as platters, which they hold up full of food to their mouths.

[351] ●

[285]

343

Granaries

The granaries, whether built singly or in a long row, are almost invariably built on piles, the floor being 3 or 3½ feet above the ground. This not only protects the grain and dried fruit stored in the granary from damp and white ants, but, as already remarked, provides an extra sleeping place for the males of the family and any male guests. There are three rows of piles, the two outer ones being tree trunks, seven or eight feet high, cut with a piece of a bough forking off at the floor height and trimmed short as a rest for the horizontal beams which support the flooring; the central piles have similar forks turned inwards at floor-height to support the floor beams, but are two or three feet higher above the floor than the outer piles, as they have to support the roof-tree. The upper ends of these long piles are either naturally forked or else notched to support the horizontal roof beams, which bear a thatched roof constructed in the same way as the roofs of dwelling-houses. Planks are laid across the floor beams at the points where these rest on the lower forks of the piles, and a flooring of bamboo wicker-work is laid on them. The walls are made of bamboo check wicker-work, the wefts being carried on around each corner of the building, where a thin pole resting on a floor plank forms the corner warp; the other warps are unsplit bamboos, but

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria

343 the wefts are of split bamboo. The corners of the walls are further secured by cords stitched through the two wicker walls round the
[283] corner warp and the corner pile. Wherever beams cross, they are lashed with *siavi* twine or thicker rope. The door of a single granary is usually a sliding piece of bamboo wicker-work; but in the long granaries it is a section of *tass* grass fence or bamboo wicker-work fastened in position by obliquely crossing bamboos.

● 251 These granaries contain immense quantities of *kosra* and other hill grains, rice, beans, dried forest fruits, etc., in big bins of bamboo basketry, smaller baskets, and large *chiptis* or lidded boxes of leaves on a framework of cane or twigs. The bins are all lidded with stitched-leaf tops, tied round the rim with creeper cord, like the paper top of an English jam-jar. The Marias store here also dried rolls of tobacco leaves, coils of creeper and other ropes, and gourds of all shapes and sizes for making spoons, ladles and water-bottles; and when they used *moghi* dancing shields and peacock plumes attached to them they used to hang them under the eaves except when they wrapped them in leaves and hung them in the tops of trees.

342 513 The village dormitory, as has been said above, is generally in the centre and at one end of the village street. It is a long-house made with no partitions, surrounded generally with a bamboo wattle-work fence; and it is practically a roofed *alpanji* or sleeping platform, the criss-cross bamboo framework of which covers almost the whole floor at a height of about 2½ feet above the floor. Often it is entered from in front by a door under the highest point of the eaves, to which access is gained by a narrow horizontal gangway of logs raised the same height above the ground as the sleeping platform and extending from the outer fence to the door; persons entering the dormitory climb on to the gangway by a rough stile, consisting of a tree stump set in the ground between two vertical posts which serve as railings.

The 'gotul-lon'

[374] The interior is badly grimed with smoke, as log fires are lit at night under the sleeping platform, the only door is fastened, and there is no window or vent for the escape of smoke. I have never found anything inside a dormitory except two or three drums and occasionally the shrine of the Village Mother.

B. Bison-horn Maria Villages, Houses, and their Contents

361 Of Hill Maria villages the essential thing to remember is that they shift as the cultivation shifts, and so seldom remain more than four or five years in one place. The few villages that have good permanent rice fields tend now to become more or less permanent.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

in the same *padar*, and here he was able to dig a hole without any root growing across it; a few roots at the side of the hole did not matter, and the finding of a stone when the hole was half dug was considered lucky. In this hole he planted a pole of *saja* wood with a forked top, to one arm of which he had tied a bundle of thatching grass, and after filling in the hole around it with earth he sprinkled some grains of rice in two heaps in front of the pole in the name of the Village Mother, the clan-god and the local spirits. The next morning he came with the elders to inspect the two heaps of grain, and as he found them scattered about, he had to dig a fresh hole exactly as before, plant the *saja* pole in it, and lay two heaps of grain again in front of it. Next morning they found the two heaps undisturbed, and so considered that the omens favoured this as the village site. The *saja* pole was left there to serve as one of the supports for the roof-tree of the *perma's* house, and the building of the new village was begun without further ceremony. Had the heaps of grain been found again disturbed, they would have decided against that *padar* and tested the omens in the same way in another *padar*. A sacrifice to the Village Mother and the Earth (*Bhum*) had preceded the actual settling in the new site.

Houses

On page 121 are a rough sketch and ground-plan of a typical Bison-horn Maria house in the village of Teiam in Kuakonda *pargana*. The inner house, consisting of the *wijja-lon* ('seed-house') in the rear, and the *narma-lon* ('middle house') in front of it, is made first; and then the *oser* ('veranda') is added, with slightly lower eaves. Though from indoors the *oser* seems just an integral part of the house, the different levels of the eaves make the house look from the outside like two card houses built on different levels. Sometimes also a second or even a third *oser* has subsequently been built on to the first, each with lower eaves, increasing still further the card house appearance. The thatch is of forest grasses or of the dwarf palms (*Phoenix sylvestris* and *Phoenix farinifera*) which are such common features of the undergrowth of the Bastar forests, and is neater than the thatch of Hill Maria houses. The doors are usually pieces of bamboo wicker-work sliding between pairs of vertical posts, like the doors of the Hill Maria houses; but sometimes the sections of wicker-work are hinged on to a doorpost by knotted pieces of split bamboo. In the richer and more advanced villages, wooden doors and padlocks are not unknown.

The *wijja-lon*, like the Hill Maria's *lonu*, is used both as a store-room and for the cult of the Departed. There being no pile granaries or long granaries, the year's harvest, not only of grain but also of forest produce, is stored in the *wijja-lon*, and so a storage platform

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

of logs covers nearly the whole of the room, except the dark corner where, as among the Hill Marias, rests the *Hanal Kunda* or Pot of the Departed. The various grains are stored in bamboo bins or in very large leaf-work *chiptis*. Other baskets contain dried mango pulp, fresh mangoes, mango kernels whole or crushed, the mousy smelling flowers of the *mahua* (*Bassia latifolia*), *mahua* seeds, and the fresh or dried fruits of the tamarind (*Tamarindus indica*), *seona* (*Gmelina arborea*), *achar* (*Buchanania latifolia*), *tendu* (*Diospyros melanoxylon*), *siari* (elephant creeper, *Bauhinia vahlii*), the various dwarf palms, and other trees. They store far more forest produce than the Hill Marias, but less grain; their *penda* slopes are far less extensive, and, as copper coin circulates freely among them, they sell much more of their rice and garden produce. They do not use the various forest yams nearly as much as the Hill Marias.

The *narma-lon* is a sleeping room for the women and small children, and household goods and utensils are kept there. In the *oser* is the cooking hearth, the *ahhi* mortar holes in which grain is husked with the large *musal* pestle, very similar in type to the Hill Maria *uspal*, hen's nests, water-pots, leaves for plates, etc. If any of the intoxicating *landa* gruel is under brew, it is kept usually in the cooler and darker *wijja-lon* or *narma-lon*. An interesting utensil seen in many Bison-horn houses is a spoon of brass, like an English pipe with a straight stem, and an exact reproduction in shape of the gourd ladles known in the hills as *paghas* and in the plains as *orka*, described on page 66 above. This is called a *kal-burria* or 'wine-ladle' and is used for distributing liquor. It is made by the Gharwa brass-workers by the *cire-perdue* process.

There are often side-sheds in which members of the family sleep, or where goats or kine are tethered at night, and poultry roost.

The other contents of their houses are similar to those of the Hill Maria houses, but they generally have more tools, weapons, hunting-nets, clothes and jewellery, owing to their growing habit of regular attendance at weekly bazaars and their greater readiness to sell their produce.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 A W32 Gond A W32
Muria

is only a little to be done, the crop is piled round the pole and boys thrash it there: otherwise a bamboo rail is tied to the post and perhaps supported by another on the circumference of the thrashing-floor. A line of men hold on to the rail, sometimes there are two lines on either side, and so they thrash. I have not seen them go round and round in procession, as the Baiga do.

A rich man with many fields often employs the chelik to work for him, but it is *polo* (taboo) for the motiari to help in the thrashing.

It is also taboo for women to winnow. A chelik stands on the thrashing-floor and gently shakes the grain from a basket held high above his head: the wind carries the chaff away. Sometimes another man fans the falling grain with a winnowing-fan or big basket and they generally fan the pile of grain to remove any chaff that may have settled on it.

Boys fan bride and bridegroom at a wedding in just the same way after giving them their ceremonial bath.

When the work is complete, the Kada Marenga ceremony is performed, and offerings are made to the Village Mother.

Storing the Grain

The Muria do not make corporate granaries, but especially in the west each large house has a special granary, raised on pillars from the ground.

In the house, the dhusir-bin made of paddy rope is often used. A network of siari cords is laid on the ground. On this the Muria coil paddy rope anti-clockwise to about two feet diameter, lay paddy straw on this, pour on grain, wind the rope round, gradually build it up, pour in more grain, pound it down with a husker and tie it. At the top they place a ring of siari cord and slip the ropes through it. Then they beat indentations into the top of the bin and tie the cords along them. This bin is aptly described as the 'boy who binds a cloth tightly round his waist'.

Special bins are made for the unthrashed mandia in the *bari*. Square boxes are made of date-palm leaves tied to a wooden frame and bound round and round with rope, supported by poles above the ground. The bin is filled with the mandia and closed with grass at the top. Sometimes the walls are of matting.

The New Eating Ceremonies

Before there can be any general use either of crops or the various forms of jungle produce, there must be the appropriate Korta Tindana, or First Eating ceremony, a sort of Harvest Thanksgiving in honour of the earth which has given the crop. The ceremonies at all these are alike, except for the different fruits or grains that form the bulk of the feast; I describe a typical Marka Pandum at Masora in Chapter VII, and need do no more here than give a list of the chief festivals.

Irpu Pandum (February-March). The ceremonial gathering of the first fruits of the mahua tree, and a feast at which some of them are eaten.

Marka Pandum (March). A ceremonial feast of the first mangoes and any other wild fruit that may be ready, such as tendu, char or karmata.

Korum Pandum (August). The first eating of the small grains and millets.

Korta or *Puna Pandum* (September). The first eating of the new rice, together with gourds and cucumbers.

Jata Pandum (December-January). Often called Pupal Pandum, the first eating of pulses and beans, and use of sesamum and castor oil.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

THE MURIA'S LIVELIHOOD

Their interest in these household occupations may be seen in scores of homely riddles, which describe them in vivid symbol. 883

> Drumming, drumming, what is that drum?
> At cock-crow she is drumming.

A motiari is expected to be back from the ghotul by dawn and should be busy husking grain before her parents are awake.

A broom is 'the thing that licks quickly and then falls flat'; a leaf-plate is 'the little tank full of thorns' or 'the boy that morning and evening gives a share to all'; a pot of curds hawked round the village is described as 'the white cock going from house to house'.

But the main interest of chelik and motiari—for after all they are still only boys and girls—is in food. *'Bhaio bihān handiya ma dhyān.* As soon as morning comes, his mind is in the cooking-pot.' Of things to eat the Muria have a considerable variety, much more than would be available to people of similar economic status in a town. All the rich and varied produce of the great Bastar jungles is open to them; the State has not yet interfered with their right to natural roots, fruit and leaves—they may take what they want so long as they do no damage. 262

As Grigson says of the Maria: 'The difficulty is not so much to say what they collect and eat as what they do not; in fact, if one were to take one of the lists of trees, shrubs and herbs compiled by the Central Provinces Forest Department and copy from it the names of all edible forest products, one would not even then produce an exhaustive list.'[1] I do not propose to give such a list here; but I will briefly mention the things that chelik and motiari like best. Meat and fish probably stand first in popularity—I will describe them later.

FIG. 5. Uspal rice husker. Length 5' 9"

Among fruit trees, the mahua is supreme. When the flowers begin to fall, the cattle are kept tied up until the women and children have gathered them. They spread them in bright yellow patches swiftly turning brown on rocks, before their houses, in specially-made enclosures. When dry enough, the flowers are beaten with heavy sticks, sometimes with the wooden doors of a pigsty. The pulp is made into chutney with dried khamer fruit and tamarind kernels, and eaten with rice or gruel. The oil is used for cooking and lighting. The flowers are stored in baskets, and make one of the most eagerly demanded gifts when the chelik make a dance tour of a village. 262 252 222 [373]

Another popular fruit is, of course, the mango. The motiari fetch baskets of wild mangoes from the forest where the trees grow in profusion, cut them up in the ghotul and give them with chilli and salt to the chelik. 262 222 [563]

Aonla fruit is liked, and there are many riddles about it. 'A green pigeon came from Porrobhum and laid its eggs on a leaf.' 'The white bird hides its eggs under its wings.' Other popular fruits are those of the thorny bhoir—'Mother bites, but daughter invites'; the kurlu—'The little sparrow's liver is sweet'; the sirna, the char, the jamun and the tamarind. Tendu fruit is picked while still unripe and put in kodon chaff to mature. Sometimes it is buried in the ground and a fire is lit above it. When ripe, it is eaten raw. [524] [251] Wild figs are eaten ripe or dried and ground up with flour.

[1] Grigson, op. cit., p. 151.